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ABSTRACT

Vocational English Second Language (VESL) programs have traditionally given immigrant, migrant, and refugee language learners access to employment. VESL programs provide not only the language input needed for learning specific job tasks but also address the sociocultural skills of language needed to negotiate in today's workplace. The demand for more specialized programs in the workplace has opened a new direction for VESL in this decade. VESL programs have been successful in providing functional language experiences in the classrooms or in training centers. Presently, there is a need to move beyond the training center and into the work site where functional language related to specific job tasks can be taught in the context of, rather than alongside, company training programs. VESL programs that work must consider four basic principles: (1) they must be employee centered; (2) they must include continued instruction in all four language skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening); (3) they must integrate language use and company training concepts; and (4) they must be cost effective. VESL programs that work are dynamic. They must be flexible to meet the needs of each group of workers, and they can produce workers capable of meeting the demands of the English language on the job. (KC)

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LANGUAGE BY DEMAND: A CASE FOR VOCATIONAL ENGLISH IN SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Vocational English Second Language programs have traditionally given the immigrant, migrant and refugee language learners access to the world of employment. VESL programs have grown out of larger ESL programs to provide immigrant adults with the technical and language skills needed to perform specific job tasks. Business, particularly in Hawaii, is struggling with the problem of fewer skilled workers at entry level positions. Effective VESL programs in business and industry provide employees with functional language competency for on the job training programs. The language demands placed upon the immigrant worker go far beyond the survival and social language skills learned in standard ESL programs. VESL programs provide not only the language input needed for learning specific job tasks but also address the socio-cultural skills of language needed to negotiate in today's American organization.

Most VESL courses have been designed to provide language competency and job skills training which mainstream learners into the job market. Pre-employment programs that have focused on occupational language demands such as, job application, interview, and worker benefits, as well as teaching technical skills for employment in a particular industry, have provided the necessary language skills for entry into the job arena. The nature of these courses have remained short termed: aimed at moving the learner from the classroom or training center into company training programs as expeditiously as possible. VESL courses within the workplace have continued to provide language skills as a supplement to regular training programs. The demand for increased English competency on the job however, presents an opportunity for a closer look at VESL and its role in second language instruction.

ONE STEP BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

The demand for more specialized programs in the workplace has opened a new direction for VESL in the 1990's. VESL programs have been successful in providing functional language experiences in the classroom or in training centers. While the aim of ESL programs is to improve the learner's language competency in general, the aim of VESL is to improve the worker's language competency for increased productivity and improved job performance. Presently, there is a need to move beyond the training center and into the work site where functional language related to specific job tasks can be taught in the context of, rather than alongside of, company training programs. It is therefore essential that VESL programs form partnerships which integrate language competency with company training. In this way, the second language learner has an opportunity to learn the language needed for understanding the content discussed in corporate training programs. Language competency that provides access to training will produce employees who are able to apply concepts learned in training to their job task. In addition to improved job performance, employees will gain the self confidence needed to negotiate within the organization. This is important for immigrants who come into a company or corporation with little or no experience in American corporate behavior. VESL programs that work in this way will provide support to the pre-employment language training by integrating language demands needed to function on the job with related job tasks. With the increase in the immigrant population entering the workplace, the aging of the working adult population, and the demand for technically skilled labor, VESL programs are beginning to emerge as viable partnerships between education and business. These break away from the more traditional ESL

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classroom approach in order to develop tailor made language programs designed to meet the special training needs of the individuals and the companies they serve.

Immigrants desiring job mobility are now faced with greater demands and increased options. Since company training programs are not designed to consider degree of language difficulty, a limited speaker of English who desires to move up in the organization, will need competency in negotiating with guests and clients in a number of contexts as well as understanding and applying more sophisticated communication techniques which may not be culturally familiar to him/her. VESL programs of the 90's must be redefined to include language competency which is woven into company training. They must prepare the employee for negotiating within the culture of the corporation. Such programs necessarily include corporate behavior, ethics, and interpersonal relationships in the workplace. Language skills for job advancement include goal setting, time management, written communication, and face to face negotiations.

PROGRAMS THAT WORK

VESL programs designed to provide continuing language learning to adult workers, must necessarily provide instruction and development of language skills which will enable the worker to meet the demands of the job and the company training programs as well. In addition to this, VESL programs prepare workers for higher level technical and job specific training. Improved self confidence through language competency increases opportunities for upward mobility within the organization, and/or provides opportunities for workers to make important career decisions. The elasticity of VESL partnerships provides opportunities to continuously assess employees language needs and company training goals.

VESL programs that work must consider four basic principles.

* They must be employee centered. Provide a curriculum designed and used according to the particular needs of the employee population.

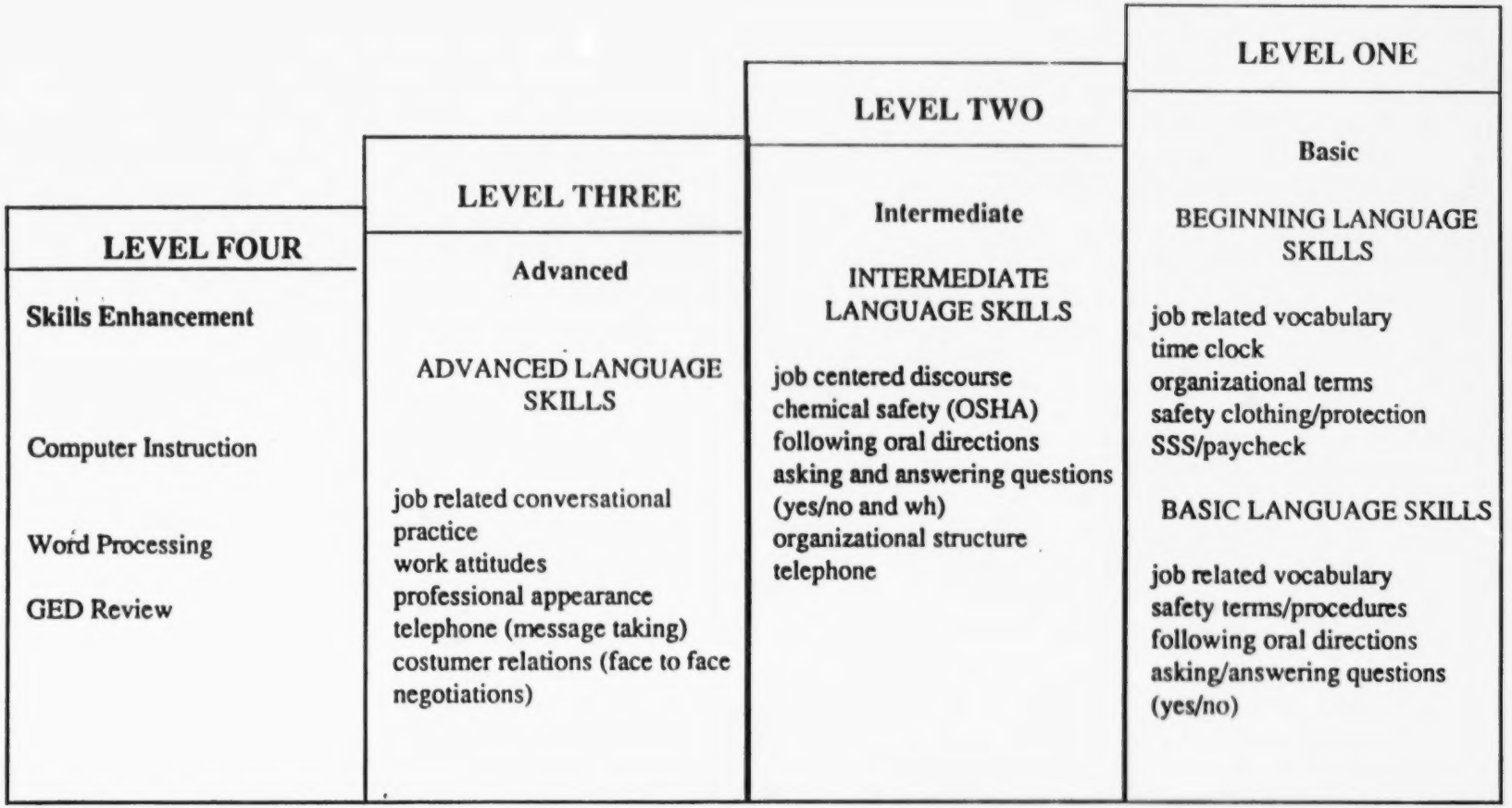
* They must include continued instruction in all four language skills(reading, writing, speaking and listening). Provide a curriculum designed to meet the job specific language needs of individual employees as well as those of a whole department of workers.

* They must integrate language use and company training concepts. Provide curriculum designed to incorporate training concepts and materials for teaching language structures.

* They must be cost effective. The program as a whole must provide language training which allows employers to see results in terms of increased productivity and improved job performance.

In conclusion, VESL programs that work are dynamic in nature. There is no one model which will answer the needs of industry as a whole. The resilience of the VESL program lies in its ability to be flexible in meeting the needs of each unique group of workers. Vocational English second language programs that arise in the workplace provide critical second language instruction which produces self conflict and socio-culturally skilled workers capable of meeting the demands of the English Language on the job.

VESL PROGRAM MODEL



VESL PROGRAM MODEL

Sheraton's Unified Commitment Concerning Employee's Self-Success

S.U.C.C.E.S.S.

Program